



**HEROIC**  
HEALTH EQUITY AND RURAL  
OUTREACH INNOVATION CENTER  
CHARLESTON VA HSR&D COIN

## Program Overview

There is increasing demand for a health services research (HSR) workforce with skills that transcend traditional HSR methodologies. The Charleston Health Service Research Fellowship aims to develop this next generation of health system scientists who can collaborate with operational partners; understand implementation and dissemination science; utilize 'big data' to provide novel insight; espouse more relevant economic analysis methods; and keep pace with private sector technology innovations.

Our program accepts clinician and non-clinician scientists for a 2-year post-doctoral fellowship training program that teaches the core competencies of the Learning Healthcare System, which endeavors to generate and apply best evidence for collaborative healthcare choices; to drive discovery as a natural outgrowth of patient care; and to ensure innovation, quality, safety, and value in healthcare.

In addition, our program provides specialized training in health equity, access to care and rural health, and partnered research. This is accomplished through structured mentoring, didactic instruction in various settings, interdisciplinary group learning, and experiential learning through clinical practice, project-based work, and scholarly activities.

## Fellowship Objectives

**Mission:** To recruit and train future health services researchers and innovators specially equipped for operations-partnered research and evaluation to improve access to and equity in health and healthcare for all Veterans.

### Objectives:

1. Provide a supportive training environment through programmatic support, intensive mentoring, development of individualized learning plans, additional degrees, and targeted coursework in public health, clinical research methods, and/or clinical informatics based on learner-specified goals.
2. Develop and deploy a thoughtfully designed, theoretically grounded local curriculum through didactic and experiential learning opportunities focusing on health equity, social determinants of health, vulnerable Veteran populations, rural health, and access to healthcare.
3. Collaborate with local and regional VA operational leaders to embed fellows within clinical teams to conduct research and program evaluations that promote learning healthcare system goals.

# HSR&D

VA Health Services Research & Development Service

## Who Can Apply

The Charleston HSR Fellowship is a truly interprofessional program open to clinicians from various disciplines as well as non-clinician scientists. Physician applicants should have completed an ACGME-accredited residency or fellowship training program, should be board-eligible or board-certified, and should have an active, unrestricted U.S. medical license.

Post-doctoral nurses who have completed DNP or PhD program are welcome to apply as are other doctoral-level clinicians. Doctoral candidates and PhD-level scientists in biostatistics, epidemiology, informatics, economics, and the social sciences are also strongly encouraged to apply.

## Program Leadership

Director, Kelly J. Hunt, PhD  
Senior VA Research Scientist  
Professor of Epidemiology  
The Medical University of South Carolina

Co-Director, R. Neal Axon, MD, MSCR  
Director, Charleston Health Equity and Rural Outreach  
Innovation Center (HEROIC)  
Senior Scholar, VA Quality Scholars Program  
Professor of Medicine  
The Medical University of South Carolina

## Training Sites and Affiliated Programs

**The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center (RHJ-VAMC)** – The RHJ-VAMC, located in Charleston, SC, serves coastal South Carolina and Georgia by providing acute medical, surgical, and psychiatric inpatient care as well as outpatient primary and mental health care to 'Lowcountry' Veterans. The RHJVAMC Research service manages research projects in all VA Office of Research and Development programs, including health services, rehabilitation, basic sciences, and clinical sciences.

Our facility consistently ranks as one of the top VAMCs in our region in terms of combined VA and NIH research funding, and we offer a robust training environment, hosting students, residents, and fellows in all clinical

and research disciplines. The Charleston VA also hosts additional advanced fellowships in quality improvement and patient safety and mental illness research.



### **The Charleston Health Equity and Rural Outreach Innovation Center – (HEROIC)**

HEROIC is a VA Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D)-funded research center housed within the RHJ-VAMC. HEROIC's mission is to advance

implementation of evidence-based interventions designed to improve access and promote equity in outcomes in vulnerable Veteran populations.

HEROIC is home to a multi-disciplinary team of dozens of health services researchers in various fields including medicine, nursing, psychology, pharmacy, anthropology, biostatistics, data science, epidemiology, and public health. HEROIC provides the infrastructure, administrative support, and leadership for the Charleston HSR fellowship.

### **The Medical University of South Carolina**

**(MUSC)** – MUSC is dedicated to the pursuit of changing what's possible in health care. MUSC Health features a 700+ bed quaternary care facility in its downtown Charleston campus in addition to over 100 outreach locations throughout South Carolina. U.S. News & World Report perennially ranks MUSC Health as the top hospital in South Carolina, and MUSC is a top 40 Academic Medical Center with an NIH-funded Clinical and Translational Research Center and an NCI-certified Cancer Center.

MUSC trains more than 3,000 students and 700 residents each year across its six component colleges. The university ranks in the top quartile of domestic educational institutions in the number of NIH grants for research training and education.

The MUSC College of Graduate Studies sponsors a Master of Science in Clinical Research, and the Department of Public Health Sciences sponsors PhD and MS degrees in Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Biomedical Data Science as well as MPH degrees in Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Health Behavior & Health Promotion.